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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY TIMOTHY J. HEAPHY

Good morning everybody and welcome. My name is Tim Heaphy and I am the United States Attorney here in the Western District of Virginia. I called this meeting today to talk to you about a very exciting new effort we are launching here in the Western District of Virginia concerning community outreach and crime prevention. I am very pleased to be joined here today by Gwen Mason, our new community outreach coordinator and we hope to articulate our vision for the program and how it moves forward.

Last week, Gwen and I were in New Orleans for a Project Safe Neighborhood Conference, this is a Department of Justice Program that takes aim at crime prevention and enforcement. Eric Holder, the Attorney General, was the keynote speaker at the conference and he said

something that perfectly captures what we are trying to do here. He said “Federal prosecutors should see themselves as community problem solvers, not case processors.” I could not agree more.

In our business we need to be about solving problems, looking to see where a problem is present and trying to bring solutions to those problems, not just enforcement and arresting people, but crime prevention and problem solving. That is what we are trying to do with the community outreach coordinator. Our success here will be judged by our impact on the community, not the number of people who are arrested but how we have impacted the community.

We have a very diverse district that includes both urban areas and vast open spaces. Things look very different throughout the district, this is a tall order because the communities of this district are so different from one another. However, if we are going to solve these problems we have to bring to bear what the attorney general calls the three-legged stool approach. That is enforcement, prevention and re-entry. It is a

model that makes sense, it shows the importance of each component, without one of the legs, things don't stand up.

In this office, we have been very good with one of the legs of the stool, enforcement. But, if we focus on just that one leg, the stool falls and the community isn't fixed, problems aren't solved. All three legs are essential in the same community if we are going to have a chance to solve community problems. We can't lock somebody up and simply have a younger person move in behind the gang banger we just took off the street. We have to have a manner in place to keep that next person from moving into the life of crime.

I have been talking about this program for a long time and, whether because they were just sick of hearing me and wanted to shut me up or not, we have been very lucky to be given this opportunity, a three-year pilot program to bring the three stool approach to the Western District. We have hired a community outreach coordinator, Gwen Mason, Gwen will be the front end specialist, the person who helps us help

communities solve their problems.

Gwen has to do two very specific things: First, she has to listen. We work in a nice office, with nice furniture and pictures hanging on the wall. We don't work in the places where impact needs to be made. So the first step is to listen to members of the community and see what kind of things are going on in the community and how we can help. Listening is very important. That is what we started here today when earlier we met with organizations from the Roanoke area who are already doing this crime prevention work. We will hold these meetings all over the district.

Once we listen, we will apply the three legged approach, we will pass out information about what programs are out there that could help each community. Part of what Gwen will do is distribute information. I also want Gwen to be the facilitator in the district to help bring resources to these groups. I want her to reach out to special interest groups, Latino groups in the valley, seasonal workers, we need to reach out to the folks

who haven't traditionally reached out to law enforcement. This is a huge, tall order and I mean it to be. Talking about this, changing communities, talking about how people live, I see that it is somewhat audacious. That is intentional. We should be, in this office, about solving the big community problems in our district. Right now, we don't effect the way people lives their lives but the hope is that we will.

Like I said earlier, this is a pilot program that has three years of funding. Ideally, after three years we will be able to look at some successes. Under Gwen Mason's leadership, I am confident we will be able to do that and my hope is that this model will be pushed out nationally, that this goes from provisional to institutional.

I want to thank the attorney general and the people at justice who agreed with this front and back end approach. General Holder talked about this in New Orleans, I have been listening to him talk about it for years, going back to when I was an AUSA working for him in Washington D.C., with his personal commitment to this, I think we have

a great opportunity here to make a real difference.

Let me talk just a little bit about Gwen Mason. As soon as I met Gwen, I noticed a little sparkle about her. I know she can carry this message forward with her mix of personal and professional accomplishments and efforts and we are very pleased to have her serving in this role. I am pleased to introduce Gwen Mason

Gwen Mason:

Thank you very much, Tim. I am very grateful to be here with you this morning and to once again be part of the Department of Justice. I am actually coming back to the department, I served as an intern with the white collar unit a number of years ago, and while I did nothing to really establish myself there, I guess I didn't do anything that would cause them to not allow me back.

In the two weeks I have been here in the Roanoke office I have been so impressed with both the attorneys and the support staff who work here and the pride and dedication they take in their work. I am

honored to be here and to have the opportunity to serve under a leader with great vision and energy like Tim Heaphy. Again, I thank you Tim.

All levels of government, federal or local, where I served previously, operate best when the citizens are engaged and involved in their communities. This opportunity is a unique chance to spark some real discussion and get folks involved in their communities because that is where change takes place.

When I was on council, people would come up to me all the time and tell me, you are in office, you have the power to change this or that and I would always tell them that change begins with an involved community. I just know that we have an opportunity here to improve communities throughout Western Virginia and I just can't wait to get started. I start this job with humility and I am anxious to get out on the road to start meeting with local community groups, law enforcement officials and elected officials. I have my eyes and ears wide open, will get a full tank of gas and will check the air in the tires because I only

have 35 and one half months to get this going.

I want to thank our friends who attended our meeting this morning, these people are already working to improve the Roanoke community and I look forward to meeting their counterparts throughout our district.

Tim Heaphy:

This is not about the Feds riding in to solve all of Roanoke's problems. Our goal is to empower communities to help themselves. We don't have all the answers, we don't do all the work. I don't expect Gwen to be wearing a whistle around her neck at midnight basketball. We are not doing this because we know best, we are doing this because we want what is best for the people of our communities.

I was so impressed at our meeting this morning where we gathered 15-20 people who are already doing this work in the community. The elements are here. in Roanoke, we are poised for success already, we just need to get everyone to talk with each other and see if we cant bring some money or resources into the district.

